

was in Philadelphia, a parts warehouse on Fairmount near 16th., 65 cents an hour, right after World War II, SNAP-OFF-TOOLS, and the manager was a bright good-looking boy, fine posture, raven hair, Tyrone Power features, his favorite saying was: "we do the impossible first and the remainder later on!" I asked to speak to him one day and I said to him: "look, 65 cents," and I said: "look, 65 cents an hour isn't very much, how about a dime boost?" he explained that they were on a limited budget, it was impossible, they couldn't do it, and besides: "Tommy was getting 55 cents an hour." Tommy was a 16 year old albino with the middle finger missing (right hand, the most important finger).

I had to take the packages to the post office each afternoon in a wooden cart with 2 big wheels and a handle in the back. I'd done that with bolts of cloth in New York City but now where I worked was next to the bar I stayed in each night until closing, and although I tried to sneak the cart up the alleys somebody from the bar would see me almost every day, usually a hooker: "well, Big Time, where ya' goin' with the backward rickshaw? ha, ha, ha!"

I came in very hungover every morning and I silently and viciously and efficiently did my work. nobody bothered me except deeply into the 3rd. week Tommy walked up and said, "aren't you happy?" and I said, "happy? why?" he said, "I'm happy." "good," I said, "go away." he said, "you ought to be happy." I asked, "o.k. why?" he answered, "because today is payday!" "but Tommy, we've worked for it all week..." "I know," he said, "but you see ... today we get it all at once!"

it was early in the middle of the next week when I phoned in sick. I was sitting in the bar about 10:30 a.m. when Tommy walked in to buy a pack of cigarettes for the manager. Tommy saw me in the bar mirror. Marie, the hooker, was telling me her troubles and buying me free draft beers.

I got to Tommy before he got to the door. "look, kid, there's no need to tell anybody that you saw me here." "oh no," he said, "I won't tell anybody."

the next morning they let me work 10 minutes, then the manager called me up into the front office. "you phoned in sick yesterday and then you were seen at the bar next door yesterday morning." I asked, "who saw me?" "it doesn't matter," he said, "what matters is that you lied to us." "no lie," I said, "I was very sick." "what were you doing in the bar?" "a man can be very sick and a bar can be the best place he can go to." "we're letting you go. you have 3 days pay coming...." he handed me a

little yellow envelope. they always paid in cash like that.

in the bar I opened the little yellow envelope: there were two fives, three ones, three quarters and three pennies.

"shit!" said Marie, "you're rich at last! I'll have a 7 with a soda back!" "give me 2 Buds in the bottle," said Lilly the lesbian. "gimme a draft beer," said the frog-man. "give me a ten and water," I said.

but the drinks came back as they always do in good places.

about 10:45 a.m. Tommy walked in for a pack of cigarettes. 16 is pretty young to be buying smokes. he saw me in the mirror. I got to Tommy before he got to the door. I held him by the arm and looked at him. "I didn't tell anybody," he said, "honest, I didn't tell anybody!" I let go of his arm and he walked out.

when I sat back down Marie said, "molesting young boys now, eh?"

I told her that yes I was and wouldn't she like to come to Camden with me that night to catch the fights?

MY KIND OF PLACE

the old people here walk their dogs
and the young are on drugs:
eleven and twelve year old boys
throw footballs in the
streets.
the boys live in 2 or 3 courts
around here
with thirteen and fourteen year
old girls and
two older women
who take and push drugs
and operate a call service.
the young football players
drive the girls to their destinations
and the two older women supply them
with drugs.
none of them go to school and they all
have Brooklyn accents.
it looks strange to see these little boys
driving automobiles while
taking the little girls to their call-
in addresses.
and the old people walk their dogs
and almost all the other people
are on relief or ATD